

January 6-9, 1983, page 1

For the first time, I took the 1:05 P.M. Martz bus from the Port Authority to Scranton where I arrived at 3:30 P.M., and WSP was there. We drove home through the country. WSP had prepared dinner: beef soup--one of his specialties. I telephoned the Pullis household as soon as I arrived in Carbondale and told Esther that I would be at the church at 6 P.M., which I was. Rev. Pullis and I set up the chairs for the meeting: we set out about 100, and then we talked about apathy and indifference and about how quiet it was in the basement of the BBC, the Social Room and it is called in official church circles, also the "Sunday School Room." AT about 7 P.M. the first attendees at the meeting began to arrive. Sue Stephens, Lou Scombordi, Postmaster Barrett, Charlotte and Joe Moro. We chatted with each other in a very friendly manner but we were all a little nervous. About 60 people showed up for the meeting, which made me feel very good. Sixty concerned citizens in Carbondale. That's not bad. I opened the meeting with the following text:

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the first meeting of the Carbondale Historical Society for 1983. My name is Robert Powell and I am the President of the Carbondale Historical Society.

One of the important functions that an organization such as the Carbondale Historical Society serves in this community is that of vehicle for the expression of public opinion. That being the case, we have, at the request of many of the concerned citizens of Carbondale, opened to the general public this meeting of the Carbondale Historical Society. We have done so for two reasons: (1) in order that we, the concerned citizens of Carbondale, might learn more about the proposed new Post Office building for the city of Carbondale; (2) in order that we, the concerned citizens of Carbondale, might rationally and intelligently decide on a course of action with reference to the plans of the U. S. Postal Service to erect a new Post Office building in Carbondale.

Before I introduce one of our guest speakers for the evening, Carbondale Postmaster Gerald P. Barrett, I would like to state the position of the Carbondale Historical Society on the proposed move of the U. S. Postal Service from its present building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Lincoln Avenue to a plot of land on the east side of Dundaff Street, across from Trichilo Wholesale Foods.

In late November, when we, the Carbondale Historical Society, learned that bids were being submitted for the construction of a new Post Office building in Carbondale, the Carbondale Historical Society wrote, on 11-23-1989, the following telegram to Congressman Joseph M. McDade [SRP reads telegram]. We also wrote, on 12-10-1982, the following letter to Postmaster General William F. Bolger [SRP reads letter]. On 12-22-1982, the following reply to our letter of 12-10-1982 was received [SRP reads reply]. "

I then introduced Postmaster Barrett and Superintendent of Postal Operations, Louis Scombordi, and they held forth for about an hour, all the while spewing forth predigested U. S. Postal Service bullshit. Barrett "dropped his bombshell"--the contract for the new building was awarded on the afternoon of January 6, 1983, said he. That was no surprise to

January 6-9, 1983, page 2

The meeting was always in order. I made sure that I announced very clearly at the outset that I would tolerate no yelling and screaming and talking out of order. If anyone had anything to say, said I, raise your hand or stand up, and be recognized. The meeting was extremely orderly--a quality which was praised in the press of the following week. Mrs. Cedric Chubb told a tale of woe--she mailed three fruit cakes at the window of the Post Office in Carbondale three weeks before Christams and the clerk at the window wrote the amount of postage due for each in the corner. Apparently the clerk in question forgot to put the stamps on the fruit cakes because several weeks later the three fruit cakes were returned to the Chubb residence on Dart Avenue. Mrs. Chubb was furious and Barrett had no answer for her. There was a certain amount of tension in the air and so when Mrs. Chubb got going on her fruit cakes, many members of the audience started tittering and laughing and it was all good hearted. Mrs. Chubb knew that it was not laughter directed at her. It was the idea that the objects that were floating around for weeks without postage were fruit cakes. Irwin Chubb asked some very direct and forceful questions of Postmaster Barret and the latter successfully avoided answering any of them. An older Italian man got very upset and agitated when Barrett said that the name of the contractor for the new building is named Pettinato. The old Italian man got all worked up because one of the County Commissioners is named Pettinato and the old Italian man concluded that even the awarding of the contract was crooked. Sue Stephens asked several direct questions and again Barrett and Scombordi hedged and avoided answering any questions that were difficult for them to answer, if not impossible. Gene Basaliga (who introduced himself to me after the meeting was over) stood up. A very impressive and forceful man. He very deliberately and quietly asked Barrett some direct questions and again Barrett hedged. Basaliga was very impressive. At the end of the meeting he asked me: "How are you related to Silas Powell?" I told him. He then stated that he knew Ruth and Walter and Frances and Lillian. He then told me who he was and said that he was raised in Underwood. "Your father," said he to me, "was the best sling shot maker in Underwood, you know." "No," I didn't, said I. Basaliga asked for WSP's address and phone number and I gave it to him. Basaliga is listed in the Dalton phone book. He said that he did not know his own phone number, which I can understand. Basaliga's sister married the Hohensee who had the farm on the road between Thompkinsville and Route 81. Basaliga said some very flattering things to me about me: "You are a very impressive young man. Where did you go to school? What do you do?" I told him. Former Mayor Frank Howard came up to me after the meeting and congratulated me on the meeting, as did others. It was very gratifying. Kurt's Aunt Marge Quinn was there. After Barrett and Scombordi held forth for about an hour, I introduced Charlotte Moro who read a prepared text, much of which was printed in the papers in the days after the meeting. Charlotte Moro reminded Barrett of the promise of the United States Postal Service, made several years ago, that if the Post Office were ever moved from Main Street in Carbondale that a substation would be maintained on Main Street. "What do you intend to do about your promise?" asked Charlotte Moro. Barrett turned white and after a few minutes of himing and hawing said that the Postal Service would stick to its word and Main Street would have a substation. Charlotte reminded the Postmaster that she had a tape recording of the promise as